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**SCHAKOWSKY HEARS FROM 9TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT SENIORS
ON SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE AND HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

PARTICIPATES IN FORUM ORGANIZED BY PUBLIC VOICES FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

EVANSTON, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today heard from more than 100 senior citizens in her district on issues such as protecting Social Security, expanding Medicare, and lowering the cost of prescription drugs.□□

Schakowsky and U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter (D-NY) participated in a forum held in Evanston, at the North Shore Hotel retirement community, and organized by Public Voices for America's Future.□ Public Voices for America's Future is an organization that seeks to engage citizens in a national discussion about issues of concern to American families and women.□ Those attending also heard expert testimony on these issues from Edith Rasell, economist at the Economic Policy Institute, and Catherine Mulligan, Vice President of the American Federation of Government Employees.

"The success of Social Security and Medicare is indisputable. These valuable programs have guaranteed the financial and health security of millions of senior citizens.□ That is why the message I heard today from my constituents was clear -- don't risk our future by turning Social Security over to Wall Street and Medicare to the insurance industry," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky said during the forum that she opposes any attempts to privatize Social Security and Medicare and all efforts that would weaken or eliminate these programs' guaranteed benefits.□ She will, however, work to increase retirement security by pushing for measures that will increase the Cost of Living Allowance, improve pension portability, and eliminate federal laws that reduce Social Security benefits for those with public employee pensions.

Also during today's forum, seniors expressed their frustration with the high cost of prescription drugs.□ Schakowsky has heard personal and agonizing stories from seniors in her district, many of whom are forced to choose between paying for food or filling their prescription.

"It is no surprise that the person paying the most for prescription drugs is the oldest, most in need, frailest senior citizen.□ That is because the pharmaceutical industry, with its allies in Congress, has stood in the way of giving our senior citizens access to affordable medication.□ We need to improve Medicare by adding a comprehensive affordable prescription drug benefit that is available to all seniors," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky released three reports last year that found that pharmaceutical companies are gouging seniors. One report found that seniors living in the Chicago area pay 80% more for the same drugs sold in Mexico and Canada. Another report found that drug manufacturers on average charge more than twice as much when drugs are intended for human use than for animal use. Finally, a report concluded that uninsured seniors living in the Chicago area pay 114% more for their medications as compared to HMOs and insurance companies.